



CITY OF WENATCHEE
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
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Backflow Assembly

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is a "Cross Connection"?

- A. Cross connections are any point in a plumbing system where a potential or physical connection between the drinking water system and any source of non-potable liquid, solid, or a gas that could contaminate the drinking water supplies.

Q. What is backflow?

- A. The reverse flow of water in a plumbing system due to backpressure or backsiphonage, backpressure is usually caused from pumping equipment that overcomes the water system pressure. Backsiphonage happens during a low water pressure event caused by a water main bursting or a fire truck connecting to a hydrant during a fire creating a large demand.

Q. What is a "backflow assembly"?

- A. Backflow assemblies are a mechanical device that permits water to flow only in the intended direction. The assembly prevents the reversal flow of water or other substances from entering the potable drinking water system due to cross connections.

Q. Is this a new requirement?

- A. Cross connection control regulations began in Washington State in 1971. In 2002, the Washington State Department of Health directed the City of Wenatchee to implement cross connection control procedures and update the city code.

Q. Does backflow really happen?

- A. Backflow does happen. Documented cases of backflow have happened in the Wenatchee Valley. Fortunately, none of the cases were fatal.

Q. Why do I have to install a backflow assembly? My landscape sprinkler system has been installed before they were required.

- A. Backflow prevention assemblies are installed to protect the public drinking water supplies. Even in the event of a pressure loss, retrofitting existing landscape systems with an approved backflow assembly ensures that the water supply will remain at its highest quality. Allowing a known cross connection hazard to exist would not only be putting our consumers at risk it is a violation of Washington State law.

Q. How do I know if I need a backflow prevention assembly?

- A. Backflow assemblies are specific to each application of cross connection that they are protecting. A hazard assessment must be completed by the City of Wenatchee to determine if a backflow assembly is required to be installed. The assessment is free of charge. Please contact the City of Wenatchee Water Resource Division at (509) 888-3200 to schedule a cross connection hazard assessment.

Q. How much does it cost to install a backflow assembly?

- A. Actual cost of the assembly themselves vary by size and type. On average, for a modest lawn sprinkling system, a backflow assembly's start at approximately \$50.00 to over \$8000.00 for a large commercial fire sprinkler system. Installation would be an added cost.

Q. Do I need to hire a plumber to install my backflow assembly?

- A. No, however, hiring a licensed and bonded plumbing company is highly recommended.

Q. If I have to install a backflow assembly, why doesn't my neighbor have too?

- A. All cross connections must be either adequately protected or removed. Because the neighbors do not have a backflow assembly does not indicate that they will not have to install an assembly if a hazard exists. Eventually, all cross connections will be corrected. Certain areas in the water system may need to install backflow assemblies prior to others.

Q. Is there any annual maintenance associated with backflow assemblies?

- A. Yes, backflow assemblies must pass an inspection once upon installation and annually thereafter to ensure their proper operation. Only a Washington State certified backflow assembly testers can perform the required inspection. Inspection prices vary from approximately fifteen dollars to fifty five dollars.

Q. If the backflow valve is in need of repairs, can I make the repairs?

- A. Yes, the property owner may make the repairs if they are needed. Contractors must be both a registered contractor and a licensed plumber to make repairs on backflow assemblies. A certified backflow tester must test the assembly after the repairs are made.

Q. What happens if I do not install or test a backflow assembly?

- A. Washington State administrative code 246-290-490 states: Denying or discontinuing water service to a customer's premises until the cross connection hazard is eliminated or controlled to the satisfaction of the purveyor.